

Singapore - where old Chinatown meets 21st century cool | Skyscanner Australia

If you haven't visited Singapore in a while it's probably time that you did! [Skyscanner Australia](#) has the inside goss on what's hot and happening in Singapore where old-school Chinatown sits comfortably within a modern Asian city at the cutting edge of technology.

With as many as four million people flocking to Singapore in 2015 the pint-sized Lion city is the exciting dot at the base of Malaysia's exclamation mark! Strikingly modern architecture such as Marina Bay Sands and Gardens by the Bay make Singapore an Instagrammers dream.

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Speak like a local

Everyone speaks English. Actually, it's often a colloquial Singaporean English, better known as Singlish, an English-based creole language. Singlish is a mash up of words originating from English, Malay, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Tamil and to a lesser extent various other European, Indic and Sinitic languages. Add to the mix some American and Australian slang and Singlish is a true international language. Here's a pocket guide to help you sound like a local.



Image credit: Far East Hospitality

Eat like a local

Like many popular Asian cities, superb food choices in Singapore are as diverse as the city itself. Start your day Singapore style with Kopi, which is the

Malay/Hokkien term for coffee. Embrace Singapore coffee terms and order a kopi-o-kosong, which is essentially an unsweetened long black! Latte and cappuccino lovers may be disappointed as Kopi comes free of froth.



Image credit: Far East Hospitality

Ignore the sugar police and tuck into an icecream sandwich – the taste of a Singaporean childhood. Roadside ice-cream carts parked alongside pedestrian walkways (you can find a lot of them scattered along Orchard Road) dish up ice-cream flavours like red bean or durian if you dare (there's also vanilla, chocolate, strawberry etc. if durian ice cream isn't your thing!), in a wafer of wedged between cookies or bread.

Book a [tea appreciation session](#) with tea master extraordinaire Vincent Low and learn about the intricacies of tea at YiXing Xuan teahouse in Chinatown. After an hour or so tasting, smelling and discussing tear you're sure to depart with enthusiasm for a brew!

Hawker food halls are well worth trying where noodles, rice and soup dishes cost a few dollars. Choose the vendor with the longest queue and you can be sure the food will be pretty damn good. Don't forget to keep a packet of tissues handy so you can reserve your seat while lining up to order your meal. This practice is called 'choping' and you'll spot it everywhere. It works surprisingly well!

Don't miss Bugis Street Markets for the food but so too for the opportunity to shop where the locals shop. Bypass street-level shops and head upstairs for affordable buys including art, books, films, famous brands and the latest music.

Stay at a local hotel

The Zhengzhou people immigrated from China to settle in Singapore. Many flocked to the docks where the [AMOY Hotel](#) sits in Chinatown. Much land has since been reclaimed and the former waterfront hotel is now a few hundred metres inland. It matters little as the real charm of the AMOY hotel is the living, breathing history contained within its ancient walls. The hotel entrance is

concealed behind historic towering timber doors of the Fuk Tak Chi Temple. The original water well is still pumping. Inside, 37 rooms have been created from former shop houses and warehouses accessed by a series of winding corridors and steps up and down. Each room is unique and includes some compact yet fabulously functional single rooms that make clever use of tight quarters.



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Another hotel doing things a little different is [The Quincy hotel](#). Modern and funky yet with just the right amount of cool, there's a lot to like about this bespoke hotel. For a start, the glass-enclosed swimming pool overlooking the city from the 12th floor is quite the place for morning laps. Don't freak out, but there's a section of the pool cantilevered over the street below that has glass panels in the floor offering views of pedestrians far below. Complimentary breakfast, all day refreshments, evening canapes and cocktails and a soft-serve icecream machine which is never switched off add up to great value.

Both hotels offer complimentary mini-bars. But their most popular trick is to provide complimentary use of a smartphone pre-loaded with data and the ability to make international calls to ten countries. Absolutely free of charge, zip, nada, nothing.



Image credit: Quincy Hotel

Explore Singapore's historic sites

Thian Hock Keng in Chinatown is the oldest Hokkein temple (1821) in Singapore and is worth a visit if only to admire the architecture and elaborate gilding. The temple was originally a joss house servicing seafarers and immigrants giving thanks after a long sea voyage to Singapore. Sri Mariamman is Singapore's oldest Hindu temple (1827), built in the Dravidian style, and is gazetted as a National Monument. A recent multi-million dollar restoration project saw 20 artists repainting all the stone deities that dominate this Insta-worthy temple.

